

## WRITE OFTEN TO THE OLD FOLKS.

from "Sky Rockets," a volume of poems by Leon Mead.

"Write often to the old folks,"

Said sister May to me,  
"Your going off to college, Will,  
Among strangers you will be;  
I know you'll work as well as play,  
But whatso'er you do,—  
Please don't forget that we, at home,  
Will long to hear from you."

"Now, Will, don't think me foolish,  
But mother is not strong,  
And she will surely worry  
If you put off writing long.  
I know her eyes would sparkle,  
And a bloom would tinge her cheek—  
If you could only write her  
A letter once a week."

"And father can advise you  
If anything goes wrong;  
Write him about your troubles,  
For he is wise and strong,  
Guard well your habits, brother,  
And when back from school you come,  
You'll find a hearty welcome  
From the cherished ones at home."

"Write often to the old folks,  
Their hair is growing gray,  
Not very many years, alas!  
Have they on earth to stay.  
Oh, promise me this favor  
And never will you rue  
The day you write the old folks,  
Who will long to hear from you."

"Dear sister, this I promise,"  
And my tears began to flow—  
"I'll write often to the old folks,  
If you think 'twill please them so."

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And I write a weekly letter,  
In my snug and cheerful room—  
And sister May informs me:  
"Mother's cheeks are in full bloom."

## AN ALGERIAN LION STORY.

How I came to be sitting, in very good company, one glorious September evening, in the little moon-lighted garden of the hotel at Algiers is neither here nor there.

My companions about the round table, which was garnished with slim bottles, glasses and piles of cigarettes, were all Frenchmen—three old Algerian colonists, the fourth an ex-lieutenant of the navy who had exchanged a life on the ocean wave for that of a hunter in three-quarters of the globe.

Before dinner I had picked up in the *salon Du Chaillu's* gorilla book, which I had never seen before, and my saying something about this turned the conversation in the garden upon wild beasts and the hunting of them.

Some wonderful stories were told, especially by the ex-sailor, though not a bit more wonderful than many one hears from old Indian sportsmen.

For the matter of that the most extraordinary sporting story I ever heard was told by—of all men in the world—a hare-hunter, who capped therewith a snake-and-elephant narrative, quite unique of its kind.

Presently a short silence, caused by the uncorking and tasting of a new bottle of Hermitage, was broken by the eldest of the party, who had not said much before. He was a good-looking man of fifty, with beard grayer than his head, and a merry twinkle in his eye. What he said I shall repeat, for the sake of clearness, in the first person, just as he told the story himself.

"The adventure of which I am going to tell you, gentlemen, happened to me a good many years ago. It was my first serious interview with a lion. Like most serious things it had a comic side, too."

"I was a young man then, and had been some half dozen years in Constantine, farming in partnership with a friend, an old colonist, whose acquaintance I had made on board ship coming out from Marseilles."

"Our business was corn and cattle raising, and we did very well together, until my partner died of a fever, and after that I took a dislike to the place. I thought I would shift my ground into this province, Algiers, push toward the frontier, and get a grant of government land and make a farm of it. So, getting a neighbor to give an eye to things in my absence, I started on my prospecting expedition. 'I say I, but I should say we, for there were three of us, sworn comrades as ever were."

"First, there was your humble servant; secondly, there was my horse Marengo, and a better never looked through a bridle. He was bred between a Barb sire and an English mare belonging to the colonel of chasseurs of whom I bought him in town, when his regiment was going home. He stood about fifteen hands two, car-

ried the Barb head, and the rest of his body was all bone and muscle. His temper was as good as his courage was high; me he would follow about like a dog, but he had one failing, and that was an insuperable objection to the close proximity of anything, except one thing, that stood on four legs. We all have our peculiarities, and this was his. Bipedes were all very well, but multiply the legs by two, and he let fly immediately, and never missed his aim.

"Such was Marengo.  
"Thirdly, there was Cognac, the faithfullest, the most honest, the oddest, and the wickedest little dog the world ever saw. He was more like a terrier than anything else, with a short, yellow coat, a fox's head, very long ears, and a very short tail. The shrillness of his bark pierced your ears like a knife, but the awfulness of his howl—he always howled if left alone—baffles description. During the fourteen years I had him, he seldom left me day or night. On a journey he would run beside me, and when tired get up and sit in my wallet. The great pleasure of his life was to steal behind people and secretly bite their legs.

"By some mysterious affinity, he and Marengo were friends from the first. They now sleep under the same tree."

"Well, we started, and after going over a good deal of ground, I thought I had decided on a location, and turned my face homeward. My direction was by Alma, to strike the great road that runs under the Atlas eastward into Constantine."

"It was about eight o'clock one morning, when I had been some two hours in the saddle, that I emerged from a narrow valley, or ravine, through which the road ran, on to a sandy plain, dotted with bushes and scrub."

"I had just laid the reins on Marengo's neck, when suddenly he gave a tremendous shy that pitched me clean off."

"The next minute, with a horrible roar, a lion sprang right at his head."

"I made sure he was on the top of him, and so he would have been, but, as Marengo wheeled short round, like lightning on his hind legs, the streaming reins caught the brute's forepaw, and, as it were, tripped him, so that he fell sideways on the road."

"The heavy jerk nearly brought the horse down, but the throat-lash broke, the bridle was pulled over his ears, and, recovering himself, he darted away among a grove of trees that stood by the wayside."

"So intent was the lion on the horse, that he paid no attention to me lying defenceless before him."

"Crawling swiftly along on the ground, he pursued Marengo, whom I gave up for lost—for his chance against the savage brute among the trees seemed hopeless."

"However, as luck would have it, there was an open space about a dozen yards across. In the centre of this Marengo took his stand, with his tail toward the lion and his head turned sharply back over his shoulder, watching him."

"He stood quite still, except for the slight shifting of his hind feet and lifting of his quarters, which I knew meant mischief."

"The lion probably thought so too, for he kept dodging to try and take his opponent by a flank movement. But the old horse knew his game, and pivoting on his forelegs still brought his stern guns to bear on the enemy."

"Soon, with a roar the lion made his spring, but Marengo lashed out both heels together with such excellent judgment of time and distance that, catching him full in the chest, he knocked him all of a heap to the ground, where he lay motionless. Then, with a neigh of triumph and a flourish of his heels, away he galloped through the grove out on the plain and was safe."

"The lion lay so still that I thought he was dead, or at any rate, quite horsed combat, and was just running to pick the bridle and follow Marengo, when he sat up on his haunches. This made me stop."

"As he sat there with his head loosely wagging from side to side, and mouth half open, he looked quite vacant and idiotic."

"Suddenly his head stopped wagging, he pricked his ears, and by the flash of his eye and changed expression, I knew he had seen me."

"Only one thing was to be done, and

I did it. The outermost tree was large and low-branched. To it I ran, and up it I scrambled, and had just perched in a fork about fifteen feet above terra-firma as the lion arrived at the bottom."

"Looking up at me with two red-hot coals for eyes, his long nervous tail lashing his sides, every hair on his body turned to wire, and his great claws protruded, he chattered at me as a cat chatters at a bird out of reach. His jaws snapped like a steel trap, and his look was perfectly diabolical. When he was tired of chattering he stood and growled."

"Catching sight of the bridle, he walk to it, smelled it, patted it, and then came back and lay down and glared at me."

"My carbine—confound it—was slung at my saddle. My only weapon, besides my hanger, was a pocket pistol, double-barrelled, and what in those days we called a breechloader—that is the barrels unscrewed to load, and then screwed on again."

"It would have been a handy weapon against a man at close quarters, for it threw a good ball; but for a lion! Besides, the beast was too far off."

"Then the thought flashed into my mind, where was Cognac?"

"I supposed he had run away and hidden somewhere. If the lion got sight of him, it would, I knew, be soon all over with the poor little fellow."

"All at once there arose, close at hand, an awful and familiar yell. It had a strange, muffled tone, but there was no mistaking Cognac's voice."

"Again it came, resonant, long-drawn, and sepulchral. It seemed to come from inside the tree. Where the deuce was he?"

"The lion appeared utterly astonished and turned his ears so far back to listen that they were almost inside out, when from some hole among the roots of the tree there popped a small yellow head with long ears."

"Down, down, Cognac!" I cried in my agony. "Go back, sir!"

"A cry of delight, cut short by a pitious whine, was his reply, as he spied me, and then dashing fully a yard toward the lion, he barked defiantly."

"With a low growl and rattling mane, the beast charged at the little dog."

"Back went Cognac into the cave as quick as a rabbit, and stormed at him from inside."

"Thrusting his great paw right down the hole, the lion tried to claw him out. Oh, how I trembled for Cognac!"

"But he kept up such a ceaseless fire of snapping and snarling that it was plain he was either well round a corner or that the hole was deep enough for his safety."

"All the same, to see the great cowardly beast digging away at my poor little dog like that was more than I could stand. Cocking my pistol, I shouted, and as he looked up I fired at his bloodshot eye. He shook his head, and I gave him the other barrel."

"With a scream of rage, he bounded back."

"Cognac immediately shot forth his head, and insulted him with jeering barks."

"But he was not to be drawn again, and after a bit he lay down further off, and pretended to go to sleep. Cognac barked at him till he was tired, and then retired into his castle."

"Reloading, I found I had only three bullets left, and concluded to reserve them for a crisis."

"It was now past noon. To beguile the time I smoked a pipe or two, sang a song and cut my name, Cognac's and Marengo's on the tree, leaving a space for the lion's, which I determined should be Wellington. I wished he would go away. Having some milk in my bottle, I took a drink, and should have liked to give some to Cognac. The lion began to pant, with his red, thorny tongue hanging a foot out of his mouth. He was as mangy and disreputable-looking brute as ever I saw. By and by he got up and snuffed the air all around him, and then, without as much as looking at me, walked off and went deliberately down the road."

"Slipping to the ground, I caught up Cognac, who had crept out directly, and, after looking carefully round for the lion, was smothering me with caresses. The lion was turning toward a bushy clump in a hollow about 200 yards off. That light green foliage—willows, water! Had the cunning brute sniffed it out?"

"Anyhow, it was a relief to stretch one's legs after sitting six mortal hours

on a branch. The lion disappeared round the bushes. I strained my eyes over the plain, but could see nothing moving. Then I gave Cognac a drink of milk and a few bits of bread-cake, for which he was very grateful. Of course it was no use beginning a race against a lion with only 200 yards start in any number of miles. The tree was better than that."

"All the same, he was a long time; perhaps he was really gone for good. Bah! there came his ugly head round the corner again, making straight for us."

"When he was pretty near I kissed Cognac, and threw a bit of cake into the hole. Then I climbed again to my perch. Cognac retired growling into his fortress, and the beast of a lion mounted guard over us as before."

"He looked quite cool and comfortable, and had evidently had a good drink."

"Another hour, and he was still there."

"While I was wondering how long he really meant to stay, and if I was destined to spend all night on a bough like a monkey, and on very short commons, he got up, and walking quietly to the foot of the tree, without uttering a sound, sprang up at me with all his might."

"He was quite a yard short, but I was so startled that I nearly lost my balance."

"His coup having failed, he lay down right under the branch I was on, crouching his head on his paws as if to hide his mortification."

"Suddenly the thought came into my mind: Why not make a devil, and drop it on his back? I dismissed it as ridiculous, but it came again. As we have all, including our English friend here, been boys, you know what I mean—not a fallen angel, but a gunpowder devil."

"Good! Well, it seemed feasible, I would try it."

"I had plenty of powder in my little flask, so, pouring it into my hand, I moistened it well with spittle, and kneaded away until it came out a tiny Vesuvius of black paste. Then I formed the little crater, which I filled with a few grains of dry powder, and set it carefully on the branch."

"My hands shook so with excitement I could hardly hold the flint and steel; but I struck and struck—the tinder ignited—now, Vesuvius!"

"Whiff, whizz! The lion looked up directly, but I dropped it plump on the back of his neck. For an instant he did not seem to know what had happened; then with an angry growl up he jumped and tore savagely at the big fiery flea on his back, which sent a shower of sparks into his mouth and nose."

"Again and again he tried, and then raved wildly about, using the most horrible leonine language, and no wonder, for the devil had worked well down among his greasy hair, and must have stung him like a hundred hornets. His back hair and mane burst into a flame, and he shrieked with rage and terror."

"Then he went stark staring mad, clapped his tail between his legs, laid back his ears, and rushed out of the grove at twenty miles an hour, and disappeared up the ravine."

"Almost as mad as the lion with joy, and feeling sure that he was gone for good, I tumbled down the tree and ran off along the road as hard as I could, with Cognac barking at my heels. By and by I had to pull up, for the sun was still very hot; but I walked as fast as I could, looking out all the time for Marengo, who would not, I knew, go very far from his master. Presently I spied him in a hollow. A whistle, and, whinnying with delight, he trotted up and laid his head on my shoulder."

"In my hurry I had forgotten the bridle, but with my belt and handkerchief I extemporized a halter, tied one end round his nose, and catching up Cognac, mounted, and galloped off, defying all the lions in Africa to catch me."

"There were still two hours before sunset to reach the next village, and by hard riding I did it. That we all three of us enjoyed our suppers goes without saying. And that, gentlemen, is my story."

"We agreed it was wonderful. —All the Year Round."

—Captain James Sanderson, who once owned the entire site of Milwaukee, died in that city the other day in a poor-house.